



blowing smoke

bruno kirchenwitz

paving paradise

A happy new decade, a hopeful new year, the '80s are over, the '90s are here. Yet for our fair valley Hwy 82 is still with us. In 1990 we are going to start solving our transportation problem by beginning to four-lane all of Hwy 82. Or are we? Let's take a closer look at this adventure in concrete creation we are about to undertake.

Along the 18 miles of the highway between Basalt and Aspen there are in excess of 180 dead-stop entry/exits. The Environmental Impact Statement of August '89, which contains around 500 pages, doesn't seem to address this aspect of the project. No mention of overpasses or frontage roads to allow access to our worker bee autobahn. Did I miss some fine print?

Or is the state highway department ready to clone, on a much grander scale, its recent

engineering fiasco known as the Basalt by-pass? A bypass that traps and kills deer and murders motorists due to its design. An "improvement" that has created more problems than it has solved. While the Basalt boondoggle took only a year or so to build, four-laning 82 will last well into the 21st century. And could even the most twisted of minds conjure a better way to shatter worker bee morale than by doubling their commute time to work every day for the next 15-20 years?

Besides delays to traffic, this project will encroach on or force relocation of homes and businesses, impact historic sites, destroy wetlands, encroach on recreational and open space sites, cause sedimentation of the Roaring Fork River throughout the entire project, destroy wild life habitat, kill more wildlife via vehicle collisions and generally degrade the visual quality of the Roaring Fork Valley. As for the benefits, I guess we can have lots of extra vehicles on the road piling into Aspen. Also it's supposed to be safer.

Now I don't have any doubt that four-laning will dramati-

cally increase use. But as for being safer, I'm afraid the death toll on Killer 82 will increase along with its capacity to carry traffic. And all those added cars aren't going to be welcome in Aspen, are they?

Bigger is not always better. There are many portions of Hwy 82 where widening or adding lanes is entirely appropriate. Work on sections like Brush Creek to Aspen and east of the Basalt bypass to Old Snowmass should begin immediately. However, the total four-laning of Hwy 82 is economically, environmentally and socially counter-productive. Wake up, people! We're not just going to pave the road to Paradise, we're about to pave over Paradise!

Our transportation problem will not be solved by building an LA freeway in our pristine mountain valley. The answer lies in more public transportation and more affordable hives for worker bees near Aspen. Not in more concrete.

We had best be careful lest in 20 years we look around us and find we have paved Paradise and are left with only a parking lot.



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M. Ray Painter, M.D.

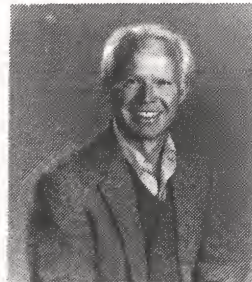
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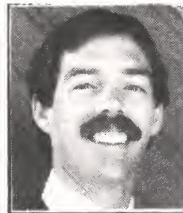
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